

Fishing Rights The Law in England and Wales

Fishing Rights

The owner of the land adjoining one side of a natural river or stream owns the exclusive fishing rights (called, Riparian Rights) on her or his side of the bank. These rights extend up to the middle of the water. The owner does not essentially have the right to fish from her or his side of the bank. An owner whose land adjoins a pond or lake has similar rights which extend only as far as the middle of the water unless it encircles the pond or lake. Although s/he owns the fishing rights, a riparian owner is still subject to the general laws protecting close seasons for fish. Just because one has access to a river, stream, lake or any other water body, one does not automatically have the right to fish in it.

Closed Season

There are annual close seasons for fish to spawn in as well as weekly close times in certain cases. For example, the coarse fish close season applies to all of the rivers, streams and drains in England and Wales and **runs from 15th of March to 15th of June.**

Licensing

Any angler over the age of twelve fishing for trout, salmon, trout, coarse fish or eels needs a licence. Fishing licenses are available from around 17,000 post offices in England and Wales. Further, please note that while the National Rod Licence gives a licence to fish anywhere in England and Wales, one will still need permission from the riparian owner to fish from her/his stretch of the river bank. **Licence Expiry** If one buys a full licence, it will run out on the 31st of March unless s/he has bought an advance new season licence. One-day licence is valid for 24-hours from the start time the licensee selects. An eight-day licence is valid for 192 consecutive hours from the start time licensee select. **Enforcement** Fishing without a licence can leave you legally responsible to a fine of up to £2,500. As a whole season licence only costs £72 (or £27 in case you select the cheaper version), it is hardly worth the risk. You must produce your licence if asked to do so by an Environment Agency bailiff or any other authorised person. Failure to do so could result in a prosecution and maximum fine. **Further, remember to carry your licence at all times when fishing.** Replace your licence if you lose it. There is a tear-off slip attached to the licence, which you should keep separately. It is important to check the local bylaws.